HAMPTON ROADS
CONFERENCE

DRAWER 98

WAR EPISODES

Civil War Episodes

Hampton Roads Conference

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

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If he is to be compelled to have these manufactured in the United States, let the rule hold good for other professions also. Instead of putting a duty on foreign manufactures, let us prohibit them altogether by withdrawing from such property all protection of the law.

To your list of questions I say emphatically, «No» to 1, 2, 3, 4; to No. 5 I have answered at length above.

July 1896 *E. A. McDowell.*

The Failure of the Hampton Conference.

WITH UNPUBLISHED LETTERS FROM JEFFERSON DAVIS AND R. M. T. HUNTER.

ON the third of February, 1865, upon the waves of Hampton Roads, near Fort Monroe, Virginia, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States; William H. Seward of New York, his secretary of state; Alexander Hamilton Stephens of Georgia; R. M. T. Hunter of Virginia; and Judge J. A. Campbell, then of Alabama, met for informal conference on the United States transport steamer *River Queen* in a conference looking toward a cessation of hostilities in the civil war.

They were not «warriors old, with ordered spear and shield,» but men from whose faces the war-paint had been temporarily washed, and whose war-clubs had been temporarily buried. Their objective point was peace, but by predetermined paths, which could not, like «mountains, converge in a single ridge.» For four hours these great men debated great questions. Messrs. Lincoln and Seward supported one side, the remaining three gentlemen pleaded for the other. The actors in this important drama of the war are dead. It was agreed that their conversations should be confidential, and many of their utterances have been closely guarded.

Six months prior to this council of peace, Horace Greeley induced Mr. Lincoln to write a letter stating the terms upon which his soldiers would lay down their arms. In a communication dated July 18, 1864, addressed «To whom it may concern,» President Lincoln proclaimed that the «integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of slavery,» were the corner-stones upon which to construct the temple of peace; that liberal terms would be granted on collateral points; and that any person who was armed with authority to talk on such a basis should have safe conduct inside his lines «both ways.» The South was not fighting for slavery, but to make two republics grow in this country where only one grew before. «The integrity of the whole Union,» and not «the abandonment of slavery,» was the condition which prevented a response to that communication.

Lincoln was preëminently in disposition and character kind-hearted and benevolent. War disturbed him. He recognized that though the progress of military events was slow, that of his armies was steady, and that the chances at that time of a restoration of peace upon his terms were favorable. He deeply desired what he prayed when about to take the oath of office for his second Presidential term, «that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.»

Horace Greeley's failure to bring about negotiations between the belligerents did not deter another eminent citizen from making a similar attempt. Mr. Francis Preston Blair conceived the idea that possibly commissioners might meet representing their respective sides, and the armies *ad interim* stack arms; that the peace feeling would then spread, and terms of settlement be reached. Greeley had tried Mr. Lincoln; Blair sought Mr. Davis. In February, 1865, Seward wrote to Mr. Adams, minister to England: «A few days ago Francis P. Blair, Esq., of Maryland, obtained from the President a simple leave to pass through our military lines without definite views known to the Government.» However that may be, Mr. Blair made his appearance in Richmond, and persuaded Mr. Davis to write him a letter which he could show to Mr. Lincoln, in which he should state that he was willing to send commissioners to confer with the Union President, if he could be assured they would be received; or, he would receive any that might be sent to him. With this letter Blair retraced his steps to Washington, showed Lincoln Davis's note, and induced the former to write him a letter which in turn he could show Davis, in which he should say that he had read Davis's note to Blair, and that he would receive any commissioners Mr. Davis might send to confer informally with him, «with a view to the restoration of peace to the people of our one common country.»

Again Blair went to Richmond and showed Davis what Lincoln had written, whereupon Messrs. Stephens, Hunter, and Campbell were appointed the commissioners on the part of the South. Observe the diplomacy exercised. Lincoln would not write to Davis, or Davis to Lincoln, but both wrote letters to Blair, each to read that of the other. So far everything was progressing favorably. Blair was doubtless delighted, while many others had an indefinite idea that those accomplished Northern and Southern statesmen would find some means to stop a war between people who «read the same Bible and prayed to the same God.»

Lincoln's companion and colleague in the Peace Conference was an enthusiast on the slavery question. A quarter of a century before, when governor of New York, Seward had proposed to extend suffrage to the negroes of that State, and had appealed to a «higher law.» He was balanced between the integrity of the Union and the abolition of slavery, but would not have objected if the scales had tipped toward the latter. At one time, as a Whig, he was a great friend of President Taylor; afterward he became a Republican and supported Frémont. He named the coming war «an irrepressible conflict,» and was willing to let it rage if its results were the abolition of slavery. He served eleven years in the United States Senate and became the logical candidate for secretary of state, because he was Mr. Lincoln's strongest opponent for the nomination for President in 1860, securing more votes on the first ballot. Seward was in advance of his party, in 1861, in the effort to secure a peaceful solution of the questions at issue, and for policy's sake advocated the evacuation of Fort Sumter. His great knowledge of public affairs, and his commanding intellectual ability, made him a capable adviser to his President.

Mr. Davis's selection of commissioners was probably as good as could be made under the circumstances. Not one of the three was a «die-in-the-last-ditch» man; all had great public experience, and required no introduction to the Union secretary of state or to his President. Stephens was born, and was buried, in Georgia. He

had been a member of several of his State's legislatures, and was equally full of pluck and infirmities. He opposed the secession movement, and helped to construct the Georgia platform of 1850, upon a plank of which was inscribed: «We hold the American Union secondary in importance only to the rights and principles it was designed to perpetuate.» He also was a member of the Georgia peace party of 1864. Later he was in the front rank of those who advised peaceable acquiescence in Hayes's election. He was the vice-president of a confederacy of States which the armies of the South were seeking to establish, but was never wholly in touch with the revolution necessary to secure their independence.

Robert M. T. Hunter died in Essex County, Virginia, seventy-eight years after he was born there; he served in the legislature of his State and in the Federal Congress, and was Speaker of the House, and for fifteen years a United States senator from Virginia, serving with great distinction as chairman of the Finance Committee. In 1860 he was a candidate for President of the United States. At the time of the secession of the Southern States there was a plan to make him President of the Confederacy, and Mr. Davis the commander-in-chief of its armies. He became instead Davis's secretary of state.

Judge John A. Campbell, a Georgian by birth, removed to Alabama, where he practised law. In 1853 President Pierce appointed him an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, where for eighteen years he dispensed justice with an even hand. He exerted his influence against secession, though he did not believe in its unconstitutionality. After the war he resided in New Orleans.

Thus the composition of the Southern members of the conference was supposed to be acceptable to the North; but the selection of its members by the South, had such choice rested with the people's representatives, might have been different. The gentlemen were strong in intellect, but weak in war; were as honorable and able as any of the Southern crew, but not adapted to tread the deck of the ship of state when the cordage was rent and the ocean's rest broken by the hurricane.

Mr. Davis put his confidence more in Mr. Hunter than in the other two, and trusted more fully to him. Notwithstanding General Lee's army surrendered but two months afterward, no commissioners could have negotiated peace even then, except on terms which should embrace the independence of the South. Had Mr. Davis agreed with the commissioners that peace should be restored upon any other basis, the soldiers in the field would have marched over him and them to battle.

One man, and only one, could have drawn the shots from the Southern guns, and, furling the Southern flags, restored peace on the conditions demanded by the Federal authorities. But Robert E. Lee was in accord with his civil chief on that question, and was determined to fight and risk the last defiance of fortune. «I say,» exclaimed Demosthenes, «that if the event had been manifested to the whole world beforehand, not even then ought Athens to have forsaken this course, if she had any regard for her glory, or for her past, or for the ages to come.»

Five years after the war, Mr. Davis wrote to Mr. J. M. Mason of Virginia very freely on this subject. He admired Mason's sturdy qualities, his courage, force, frankness, and dignified character, and they became firm friends. James M. Mason inherited many of the great characteristics of his distinguished grandfather George Mason. He had served his State in her legislative halls, was sent to Congress as a Jackson Democrat, and later was a United States senator for sixteen years. In that body he had been chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs when Davis was chairman of Military Affairs; and it was owing to this fact, perhaps, that he was appointed in 1861 agent of the Southern States in England. Mr. Davis wrote him as follows:

MEMPHIS, TENN., June 11, 1870.

HON. J. M. MASON.

MY DEAR FRIEND: It has been long since I have received a letter from you. Perhaps you will reply, it has been long since I wrote to you; but it is of the first only I think, because therein consists the loss. It is probable that it may be in my power to visit you this summer, and it is possible that about the end of July I may start to England. Will you go with me, in that event, for a trip, say, of sixty days? Your many friends there would be rejoiced to see you, and I would endeavor to be as little disagreeable on the way as is possible for me.

My journeys through the Southwest have given me much to remember gratefully, and not a little to make me feel as one sorrowing without hope.

Mr. Hunter promised me that he would write a full account of the sayings and doings of the commission which met Lincoln and Seward at Hampton Roads. I have not thought it well to write to him while he was subject to Military and Underwood authority;[1] now I do not know his address. Having got into the subject, I will give you a brief account of the matter. The commission had no instructions beyond their authority to negotiate for a settlement between the two governments. They agreed with Lincoln and Seward that they would regard their conversations as confidential. Their report, when they came back, was therefore, to a great extent, oral; the written report so meager as not to furnish, as it seemed to me, what was needful to a fair comprehension of their failure, and the reasons for it. I urged seriously that a fuller report should be made. Mr. Stephens tenaciously insisted that the mere statement would be more effective to rouse and convince the country.

Hunter told me he urged Lincoln to enter into some form of agreement, and endeavored to overcome his refusal by pointing out to him the example of Charles I.; and that Lincoln said he did not know much of history, but he did know that Charles I. lost his head. They reported to me that Lincoln said if we would lay down our arms and go home that he would promise all the clemency within the executive power, and that he refused to make or entertain any proposition while we retained our position as States confederated and having a government of their own. It was a demand for a surrender at discretion, so viewed at the time, and so treated by the orators who addressed the public meeting held in Richmond soon after the return of the commission and the promulgation of their views. If you see Hunter I wish you would talk to him on this subject. May God defend the right.

Present me affectionately to Mrs. Mason and the young ladies, and accept the sincere regard of your friend,

JEFFERSON DAVIS.

This letter Mason sent to his former colleague in the United States Senate, R. M. T. Hunter, and from that gentleman came the following reply:

[1] Underwood was the United States District Judge who had Hunter, General Lee, and others indicted for treason.

LLOYD, ESSEX COUNTY, VA.,
September 19, 1870.

MY DEAR MASON: I have been waiting until I supposed you had returned from the Springs to answer your letter, which, indeed, I ought to have answered before, but I have been so harassed by many things that my mind was hardly free for anything but the cares which absorbed it. I have read Davis's letter which you inclosed, and regret that I did not write out minutely my recollections of what passed at the Hampton Roads Conference whilst they were fresh in my mind. But I was imprisoned soon after the war, and my papers were either seized or dispersed, and since my release I have been engaged in hard work for a livelihood. As soon as I received this letter I sent for Stephens's account of the conference published in the «Eclectic Review,» which really seemed to me to be very fair (August, 1870, Vol. VII, No. 2), and from which I do not much differ except as to the report of Seward's conversation on slavery. You will see from that report I did not assent to the scheme for invading Mexico: not, I confess, from any affection for the emperor, whose whole course in regard to that matter, and toward us, seemed to me to be very weak. I was moved by considerations affecting ourselves. The whole scheme originated with F. Blair, Sr., who, as you know, visited Richmond to persuade the Confederate government to settle the controversy. Stephens was much taken with the proposition, and enforced it very warmly upon Lincoln and Seward: not as a proposition from the Confederate government, but as something to be considered. Campbell and I said nothing for a good while, to see how the other party would like it. Toward the close I disclaimed the whole thing, as Stephens reports in his published account of the conference. We all reported to Mr. Davis. I know that in our opinion no settlement was possible except upon the condition of abolishing slavery and returning to the Union. But there was a question beyond that.

Supposing these things to be inevitable, as they then seemed to be, was it not worth the effort to save as much as possible from the wreck? Upon this Mr. Davis and I differed. I thought the effort ought to be made, but I saw then, and see it still more plainly now, that there might be two sides to that question. Although I retain my first opinion, I do not censure him for thinking differently. When the concessions believed to be inevitable were made, one might well have supposed that the Federal Government would have sought to have made them as tolerable as possible to us, and to conciliate us as far as was consistent with these objects. This was only to attribute to them an ordinary stock of good sense and good feeling. But I feared the bitterness of feeling engendered by the contest, and although far from appreciating the full extent, I was not mistaken as to its existence.

Whilst I expressed this opinion both to Davis and Lee, I told them that if they thought there was hope from war I would do my best to aid them. They were to be the judges of that matter. Under these circumstances I made a speech at the African Church, which some of my friends thought was a mistake. But if the contest was to be kept up, it was necessary to animate the spirit which could alone sustain it.

We were all agreed in the government as to the policy of an armistice; we should then have obtained time either to get some settlement of the question, which would have saved us much life and suffering, as also to recruit our armies, which were then suffering much from desertion and the want of all necessary supplies.

But it was not to be had, which I think we all regretted. I hope, however, that we may meet some of these days, when I can explain these and other matters by word of mouth, and far more fully than upon paper. The difficulties which the Confederacy encountered are not generally known. The sacrifices and gallantry of the struggle on the part of the South, and especially of Virginia, have never been surpassed, and hardly equaled, in history. The Southern side of this history ought to be written. If I owned my time it would be a labor of love to endeavor to do it.

Most truly and faithfully your friend,
R. M. T. HUNTER.

HON. JAS. M. MASON.

Mr. Hunter, it seems, did not assent to the plan, warmly urged on Messrs. Lincoln and Seward, that both the Northern and the Southern armies should invade Mexico, expel the French, and enforce the Monroe doctrine.

Generals Grant and Lee riding side by side, with the heads of their respective columns turned toward old Mexico, would have been a most extraordinary exhibition. History has never recorded anything similar to such display of temporary forgiveness on the part of two armies which for nearly four years had sought to tear each other to pieces. Foes would have been changed to comrades, who might have remained so after both North and South had vindicated the principles of the Monroe doctrine.

The conception was wild, extravagant, and delirious, whether originating with Blair or Stephens. It was conceived and urged because there was nothing else in sight. Mr. Lincoln would accept nothing but the Union, and Mr. Davis nothing but the independence of the Southern Confederacy. There could be no peace until one side became the victor, the other the vanquished. Such conditions developed numberless schemes, and from the difficulties of the situation the Mexican plan was evolved. Undoubtedly an armistice between the contending forces would have been welcomed by the men whose bodies were targets for each other's rifles, and as many from both armies as were necessary for the purpose might have been marched across the Rio Grande, bringing results which might have changed the unhappy fate of Maximilian, Mejía, and Miramon. But what then? When the last French soldier had departed from Mexican soil, who could foretell what would have been the relations between the authorities at Washington and Richmond—whether war would have been again declared, or, the passions of the contestants having abated, peace would have been enthroned on some basis?

Mr. Lincoln was well satisfied then that peace would be dictated on his own terms, and did not intend to be diverted; while Mr. Davis would have entertained such a proposition only because it was a straw that a drowning man is always authorized to seize.

Fitzhugh Lee.

VEST CORRECTS TILLMAN.

Gives the Correct Version of Lincoln's Interview with Stephens.

1902

SPECIAL DISPATCH TO THE GLOBE-DEMOCRAT.

WASHINGTON, May 8.—To many one of the touching and pathetic scenes of the present session was witnessed in the Senate this afternoon when Senator Vest arose to correct for history and for all time a misstatement which he said had been made the day before by Senator Tillman, and had been frequently repeated by others in public speeches and in writing. He referred to the interview between the vice president of the confederacy and President Abraham Lincoln. The statement to which the venerable senator objected as untrue was that when President Lincoln met Mr. Stephens, vice president of the confederacy, he wrote on a slip of paper, "Save the Union," and told Stephens to fill out the balance of the conditions. Senator Vest, his knees trembling with weakness, and his voice shrill and piping, yet ringing clear and distinct in spite of advancing age, said he wanted to correct this statement. He gave a true version of the conference as secured from Mr. Stephens. He said that Mr. Lincoln told Stephens he would confer no further unless there was an understanding that the confederacy was ready to agree to an unconditional surrender. Vest said with some feeling that he was the last of the original twenty-five members of the Senate of the confederacy, and before he was gathered to his colleagues of that time he wanted to correct for the benefit of history the statement made.

Albany Argus.
Feb. 2, 1915.

February 2, 1865—Three Confederate Commissioners Left City Point on a Government Steamer for Hampton Roads, to Discuss Peace with President Lincoln—Courtesies to the Party by Gen. Grant.

FIFTY years ago to-day three Confederate commissioners, Alexander H. Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter and John C. Campbell, left City Point in a government steamer for Hampton Roads, to discuss peace with President Lincoln.

On the same day the President left Washington to meet the Confederates. The conference that had been arranged to take place the next day might have ended the war had the Confederate delegates come prepared to treat for peace; but they had not so come. Their instructions from Jefferson Davis aimed at a discussion, the purpose of which was to ascertain whether a cessation of hostilities, in the nature of an armistice, might not be arranged.

Lincoln went to the meeting prepared to grant the South almost any concession within reason if it would lay down its arms and come back into the Union. This the Confederates were not prepared to do.

As the scope of the instructions under which the delegates were proceeding was kept secret, the news of their arrival within the Federal lines before Petersburg had made a great stir in both the armies of Grant and of Lee.

The commissioners had arrived in front of Grant's lines on Jan. 29, and had been passed through them on Jan. 31. The formalities attending their arrival within the Fedcral lines were the occasion of a general truce, and a period of jubilation between the soldiers of the opposing forces.

Troops thronged to the point of the works held by the 9th corps, at which the flag of truce advanced, to announce the coming of the commissioners. On the Union works stood solid masses of men in blue. The Confederate works were crowded with hungry-looking and lean Southerners in rags, interspersed with many women who had come out from Petersburg.

Received by Grant.

In the open country back of the Confederate lines a closed carriage was seen approaching from Petersburg. As it drew up behind the works and its occupants descended, the Confederate soldiers burst into cheers and the women waved their handkerchiefs.

The party was some time in making its way through the network of the entrenchments and pits to the open ground between the hostile lines, which was perhaps 300 yards wide. Crossing this, they were received by a group of Federal soldiers, including Lieut. Col. O. E. Babcock of Grant's staff, and escorted to a point where several new ambulances—the ambulance was the usual conveyance for civilian visitors to the army—awaited them. These had been sent by order of Gen. Grant to convey the party to City Point, to headquarters, about eight miles away.

It was after dark when the delegates arrived at Grant's headquarters. Mr. Stephens, in his book on the war, has left a description of his first impressions of Gen. Grant.

He found Grant "plainly attired, sitting in a log cabin, busily writing on a small table, by a kerosene lamp. There was nothing in his appearance or surroundings which indicated his official rank. There were neither guards nor aids about him. Upon Col. Babcock rapping at his door, the response, 'Come in' was given by himself in a tone of voice and with a cadence which I can never forget."

Grant and Stephens had never met, and each was keen to know the other. Mr. Stephens was one of the brainest men in the South, and while before this meeting he "would as soon have thought of drawing a comparison between Louis Napoleon and Washington" as between Grant and Lee, his impressions of Grant upset some of his preconceived ideas as to the Federal leader's character.

Grant's Discreet Silence.

Struck first by Grant's simplicity of manner, the point and terseness of his speech, and his quickness of perception, the Southern statesman soon became impressed with "the very extraordinary combination of rare elements of character which he exhibited."

A conviction grew in his mind that Grant was "one of the most remarkable men I had ever met with; that his career, if his days should be prolonged, was hardly entered upon; that he himself was not aware of his own power, and that if he lived he would in the future exert a controlling influence in shaping the destinies of this country, either for good or evil."

Gen. Grant showed the commissioners every courtesy. They were escorted aboard a Government steamer, the Mary Martin, formerly running on the Hudson river, where they had comfortable quarters. No guard was placed on board, and there were given perfect freedom to go and come as they pleased, without the exaction of any promise not to study military conditions.

This liberty the commissioners improved by several times calling on Gen. Grant. Mr. Stephens particularly sought Grant's society. They conversed freely on the blessings of peace, but Gen. Grant did not commit himself on the subject of the Confederate commissioners' mission, as he considered that outside his functions. He noted, however, that they held themselves to be delegates from the Confederate Government. He had never admitted that there was such a government, but he tactfully said nothing on the subject.

When word came that the commissioners would be received by the President at Hampton Roads Gen. Grant gave the necssary orders for the safe and comfortable transportation thither, and wished them Godspeed on their journey.

FIFTY years ago to-day a conference on the subject of peace was held on a steamer at Hampton Roads between President Lincoln and three representatives of Jefferson Davis.

Although the conference lasted four hours nothing tangible was accomplished. It was scarcely possible that anything could be accomplished, as Lincoln had met the commissioners on the condition that they should treat "with a view to securing peace to the people of our one common country," while the Confederate commissioners had come under instructions from Jefferson Davis to consider the conference as between the representatives of two countries.

Lincoln had laid down the condition quoted as the one on which he would receive the commissioners, and to these they had appeared to accede on being admitted to the Federal lines at City Point. From the moment they met the President on board his steamer at Fort Monroe, to which point he had proceeded from Washington to meet them, it was apparent they had made this concession with a reservation. They wished for peace, but they would not accept peace with the reestablishment of the Union. Their immediate hope was to secure an armistice, or cessation of hostilities.

"Shuck" and "Nubbin."

Lincoln had decided to meet the commissioners more from a purpose to show that he left no stone unturned to secure peace than from any hope of securing it by negotiations with them.

Before deciding to meet them in person, he had sent Secretary of State Seward to Hampton Roads to meet the Confederate commissioners. To him he had stated that three things were indispensable to peace, the restoration of the National authority, no receding on the slavery question, and no cessation of hostilities until the South laid down arms.

The three Confederate commissioners, Alexander H. Stephens, R. M. T. Hunter and John A. Campbell, having been sent down from City Point by Gen. Grant on an army steamer, went on board the President's boat in the morning. The conference took place in the steamer's saloon.

When the three Confederates had entered it, the President and Mr. Seward appeared. No other persons were present, except a colored steward who brought in refreshments.

As Mr. Stephens had known Lincoln when the two were in Congress, he naturally became the spokesman for the commissioners.

The meeting of Lincoln and Stephens was an odd one. Both were mental giants, but their physical disproportion was great. Lincoln, standing six feet four inches high, was obliged to stoop when he shook hands with Mr. Stephens, who was but little more than five feet tall and barely weighed more than 100 pounds. His complexion was sallow and his skin seemed shriveled on the bones.

Mr. Stephens came on the steamer wrapped in a huge coat, much too large for him. When he removed his coat the idea occurred to Lincoln that he took it off "just about as you would husk an ear of corn," suggesting the remark, which Lincoln made later: "That's the biggest shuck and the littlest nubbin I ever did see."

The One Way to Peace.

The former acquaintance between President Lincoln and Mr. Stephens made the opening of the conversation easy. They talked of a congressman's campaign club that had helped elect President Taylor, and Lincoln asked about some of its members, who lived in the South.

After this conversation, Mr Stephens asked if there was not some way of restoring to the States the harmonious relations of other days.

At this point Mr. Seward interposed, with the statement that it was thought best to have no record made of the meeting—that all communica-

tions should be verbal. To this the Confederates agreed. Mr. Stephens then repeated his question, to which Lincoln replied that he knew of but one way and that was "for those who were resisting the laws of the Union to cease their resistance."

Mr. Stephen rejoined that he had been led to believe that "the present strife might be left in abeyance while the two parties occupied themselves with some continental question."

The Case of Charles I.

This was a reference to a plan that had been proposed to Jefferson Davis by Francis P. Blair, Sr., of Maryland, for an invasion of Mexico. Mr. Blair's visit had led to the sending to him men of the Confederate delegation.

Lincoln at once disclaimed any responsibility for Mr. Blair's plan, stating that Mr. Blair had gone to Richmond on his own authority. Mr. Stephens continued the subject, dwelling on the advantages of extending a possible new Federal republic by the absorption of Mexico.

Lincoln brought the subject back to the point at issue, by saying the plan called for an armistice, and that he could agree to no armistice, nor could he enter upon any agreement of any nature with the Confederate States.

On this point Mr. Hunter urged as a precedent the course of Charles I in treating with the rebellious members of his Parliament. A whimsical expression appeared on Lincoln's face when he remarked: "On questions of history I must refer you to Seward, for he is posted on such things, and I don't profess to be; but my only distinct recollection of the matter is that Charles lost his head in the end."

Offered to Pay for Slaves.

The discussion, which became general, was free and courteous.

The Confederate delegates turned to the subject nearest their hearts by asking Lincoln what assurances he would make them of liberal treatment of the South in the event of the war being ended.

He told them that he believed that the revolted States would again be permitted representation in Congress; that he would exercise power of the executive with the utmost liberality, so far as the enforcement of the Confiscation act against the Confederates was concerned; and that he would be willing to remunerate the people of the South for the loss of their slaves. Indeed, Lincoln had in his pocket at that time the draft of a bill that he wanted to send to Congress when he returned to Washington, providing for the payment of $400,000,000 to the Southern States for their slaves.

When the evils of immediate emancipation were mentioned by the delegates, who pictured the sufferings of the women and children and old and infirm slaves, who would not be able to support themselves, Lincoln had recourse to a story to express his views. This was about an Illinois farmer who, on being advised to plant potatoes and let his hogs feed upon them in the field, asked what he should do when the ground was frozen, and was told: "Let 'em root."

Anything for the Union.

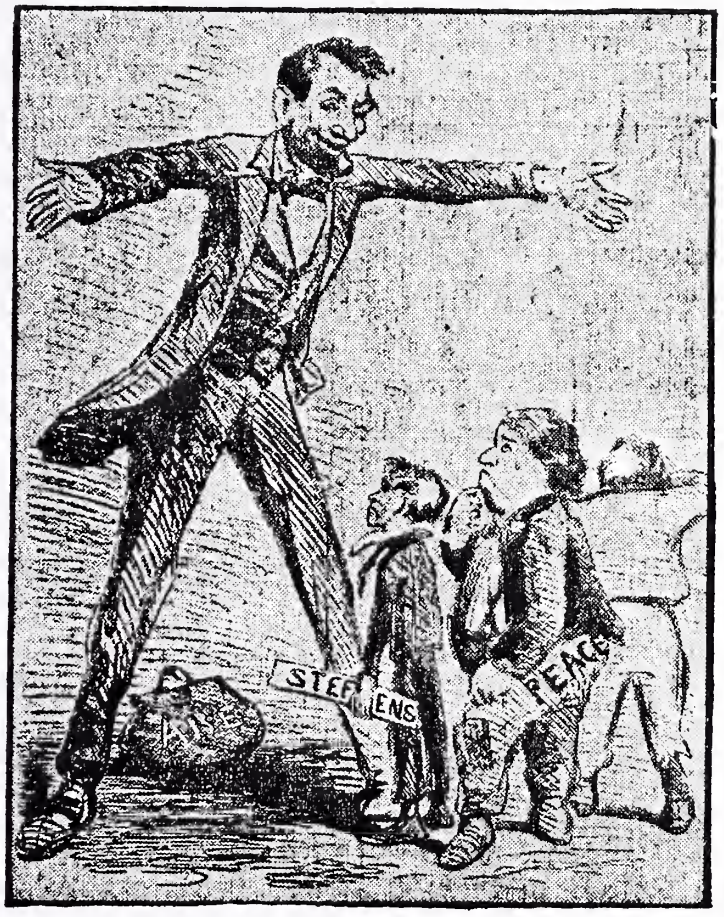
The paramount importance attached by Lincoln to the restoration of the Union as a preliminary to peace, is shown by a remark he made to Mr. Stephens, to whom he said, taking him aside and showing him a sheet of paper: "Stephens, let me write 'Union' at the top of that page, and you may write below it whatever else you please."

To Mr. Stephens the President suggested that the southern States separately might bring the war to a close. He suggested that if he lived in Georgia, as Mr. Stephens did, he would "go home and get the Governor of the State to call the Legislature together and get them to recall all the State troops from the war, elect senators and members to Congress" and ratify the 13th Amendment to the Constitution (abolishing slavery), the ratification to take effect in five years.

None of Mr. Lincoln's friendly and liberal suggestions had effect upon the Confederate commissioners. Although they knew their cause was on the brink of disillusion, they were determined to see the South go down fighting rather than yield to Lincoln's condition of submission to the laws of the Union as the prime essential of peace.

At the end of the conference the Confederates returned to their steamer and started back for Richmond, while Lincoln set out on a return trip to Washington.

February 3, 1865—A Conference on the Subject of Peace Was Held on a Steamer at Hampton Roads Between President Lincoln and Three Representatives of Jefferson Davis.



A WAR-TIME CARTOON ON THE PEACE CONFERENCE.

(From Harper's Weekly.)

The Confederate Commissioners Were Represented as "Flying to Abraham's Bosom."

Albany Argus, Feb. 3, 1915.

Kenesaw M. Landis II:

How Lincoln Handled A Crucial Conference

IN HIS Lincoln Day speech, Gov. Dewey referred to the momentous conference between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin.

He wound the thing around to Lincoln, and I got to wondering how Old Abe would have done if he were in Roosevelt's place.

A. H. Stephens.

The farthest Lincoln went to attend a conference was down the Potomac to Hampton Roads, where he met the Confederate commissioners who were trying to negotiate a peace.

Lincoln was not meeting allies but enemies, who were considered not only rebels but traitors. But he didn't stand on protocol.

He wired Grant: "Say to the gentlemen I will meet them personally at Fortress Monroe as soon as I can get there."

Lincoln left the White House more secretly than F.D.R. Early one morning, without informing his secretary, he walked out the front door, followed at 200 feet by a servant carrying a small valise.

* * *

A Little 'Corn' About An Overcoat.

THE conversations were held on Lincoln's steamer —and here is one thing Dewey wouldn't like. It was agreed that they be informal and off the record.

Lincoln broke the ice in his first words to Alexander H. Stephens, vice-president of the Confederacy.

Stephens, who was shorter than Stalin and weighed only 90 pounds, came on board wearing a clumsy gray overcoat of coarse Southern manufacture. It reached to his feet.

As he struggled out of the huge affair, Lincoln smiled and extended his hand: "Never have I seen so small a nubbin come out of so much husk."

Stephens appreciated the joke, and in a later newspaper article told how Lincoln got the better of one of his own colleagues, Mr. Hunter.

* * *

Used His Talents to Weaken Morale.

HUNTER was hotly disputing an argument that Roosevelt may have used with Stalin. According to Lincoln, a President had to deal with Congress and there was a limit to what he could do. Hunter went back into history to show that King Charles I of England had bargained with people in arms against his government.

"Mr. Lincoln's face," wrote Stephens, "then wore that indescribable expression which generally preceded his hardest hits, and he remarked: 'Upon questions of history I must refer you to Mr. Seward, for he is posted in such things. My only distinct recollection is that Charles lost his head.'"

Lincoln knew the conference couldn't succeed. He was using his rare talents to disarm the commissioners and weaken the morale of the South. He had to be tougher than Roosevelt. At one point he reminded the commissioners that they might be hanged for treason.

But after a painful pause, even Hunter smiled: "Well, Mr. Lincoln, we have about concluded that we shall not be hanged as long as you are President —if we behave ourselves."

I think Old Abe would be able to adjust matters with Churchill and Stalin.

Chi. Sun - 2-14-45

RIVER QUEEN (1864)

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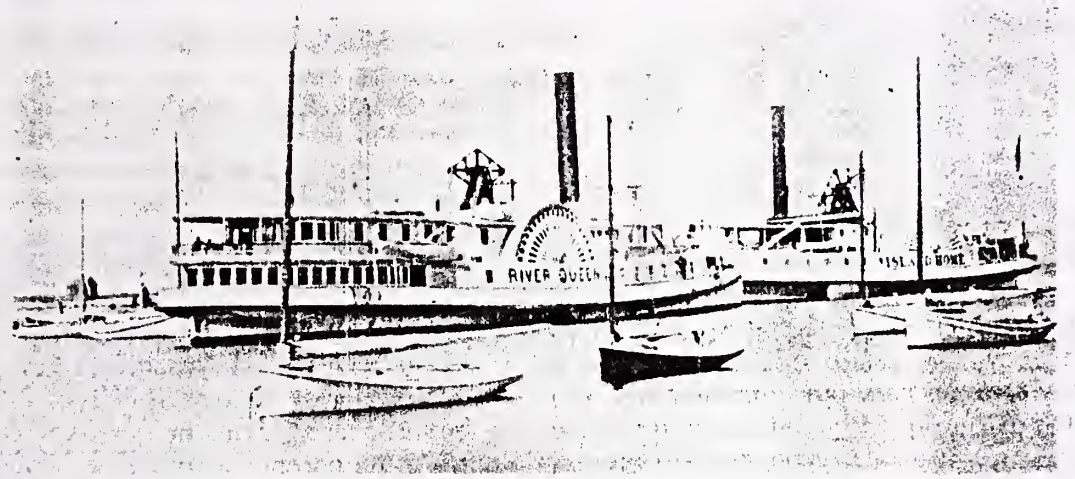
The RIVER QUEEN, built by Terry at Keyport in 1864, played a dramatic role in events which soon led to the end of the Civil War. While used as General Grant's dispatch boat, President Lincoln was often aboard for important and historic conferences and for his living quarters. She was launched March 31, 1864 and then was the largest vessel to have come out at Keyport. Only one larger, the SEAWANHAKA, was to be built there in 1870.

valued the vessel at $145,500 and provided that she was to proceed to Fort Monroe, Va. to load. She was then used for a few months to carry troops and supplies to Fort Monroe and to City Point, Va., then the headquarters of General Grant at the junction of the James and Appottomax Rivers.

On January 25, 1865, the Chief Quartermaster of the Armies Operating against Richmond at City Point wrote to the Chief Quartermaster, Department



The RIVER QUEEN tied up at Martha's Vinyard with the ISLAND HOME.
Courtesy, Steamship Historical Society of America.

The QUEEN was first enrolled at Providence, R. I. in the names of Frank Mauran, Benjamin Buffum, Earl P. Mason, James T. Rhodes and Jedediah Williams. These men had been running steamers on the Providence River between Providence and Newport and on river excursions. Before they acquired the QUEEN, they had been using the Keyport-built MONTPELIER, acquired in 1863. In 1864 they ordered the BAY QUEEN for the same service and after they incorporated in 1865 as the American Steamboat Company, they had Terry build for them at Keyport the WHAT CHEER, added to the route in 1867. Before they incorporated, they sold the RIVER QUEEN in early December 1864 to George A. Power, Alfred Van Santvoord and John Packer of New York where she was enrolled by them on December 21, 1864. The sale must by then have been consummated, as three days earlier, she was chartered by Power for her owners to the Army Quartermaster Department at New York at $241 per day for a period of thirty days and as long thereafter as her services were required. The charter

of Virginia, stating that General Grant directed the vessel to be discharged from government service unless he, Grant, deemed her needed for further service. She was retained until the Quartermaster General at Washington was heard from. With the three Confederate peace commissioners then on their way to Fort Monroe to discuss a possible negotiated peace with Secretary of State Seward, Grant required a vessel to receive them. Four days later, at the request of Grant, the Quartermaster at Fort Monroe reported to Quartermaster General Meigs at Washington his opinion as to the use of the QUEEN as Grant's dispatch boat. He wrote "This boat is almost new, is built in the most substantial manner, is very fast and powerful and well adapted for a dispatch boat." He then asks Meigs if she should be retained. Meigs decided that she should and she was assigned to Grant as his dispatch boat.

On January 31st, the three Confederate commissioners, Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederacy, John A. Campbell, its Secretary of War and Senator Robert M. T. Hunter, came

General Grant with wife and son at City Point during the winter of 1865. From a photograph by Mathew Brady, famous Civil War photographer.

through the lines from Petersburg in a carriage under a flag of truce bound for the conference. The RIVER QUEEN had been sent to Washington to convey Seward to Fort Monroe and on February 1st he began to confer there with the southern commissioners. As questions arose which Seward and Grant decided could only be resolved by the President, Grant wired him to participate. The THOMAS COLLYER was provisioned at Annapolis to take Lincoln to Fort Monroe. On February 2nd, he took a train to Annapolis and boarded the COLLYER to reach Fort Monroe in the evening. On his arrival, he conferred with Seward until late that night. The next day, they were taken up the James River to City Point to resume the conference on the RIVER QUEEN. Though the session lasted about four hours, nothing definitive came out of the meeting and the commissioners returned South. The President and Seward then sat down with Grant at the latter's headquarters ashore to brief him on what had been discussed. The QUEEN, having been sent to Hampton Roads, Lincoln and Seward boarded her there to retire in the evening. On the 5th, the QUEEN departed Hampton Roads to return the President and Seward to the capitol. They debarked at Annapolis on the sixth and returned to Washington by train.

On February 26th, the QUEEN was ordered to report to a quartermaster at Washington. During her absence from City Point, the quartermaster had assigned the Keyport-built D. R. MARTIN as Grant's dispatch boat. The MARTIN had been chartered to the government a few days before by Henry M. Seabrook for the Keyport & Middletown Point Steamboat Company. It seems that the QUEEN had been ordered to Washington to pick up a party of Congressmen and others with wives to attend a dance aboard the vessel on March 7, after her return to City Point. Among those invited to attend was General Marsena R. Patrick, Provost Marshall General of the Army of the Potomac. With the war still on, the comments in the diary of this disciplinarian about the affair were "There is a dance on board the RIVER QUEEN, which brought down the party from Washington. They have beset me to go, but I cannot mix with that gathering."

On March 20, Grant invited the President to City Point for the now famous conference with his top lieutenants, Generals Grant and Sherman and Admiral Porter. For this, Grant sent the QUEEN to convey the President from the capitol, he boarding her on March 23 at the Sixth Street wharf. He took aboard with him Mrs. Lincoln and son Tad. On the trip, the QUEEN was convoyed by the U. S. S. BAT, a fast British-built blockade runner which had been captured in October 1864, then bought by the Navy from the prize court and assigned to the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Arriving at Fort Monroe at 9 A.M. the next day, the President was taken up the James where he conferred with Grant at the latter's headquarters ashore at Appottomax Manor. On the 25th, after greeting some who were gathering for the conference, he took a special train with his party to visit General Meade's headquarters. After striding a horse to view a part of the battlefield where the dead had been buried, he returned to the RIVER QUEEN so worn out that he declined Grant's invitation to supper, then retired on the vessel. The next day, Lincoln again conferred with Grant while high brass and aides were gathering for the conference. General Sherman arrived that day in time for supper. Some were surprised to see him so soon after he and his troops had been so hotly engaged in repulsing the Confederate attack on Bentonville, N. C.

On the 28th, the President met with Grant, Sherman and Porter in the after saloon of the RIVER QUEEN. What was to be done to bring the war to a conclusion as speedily as possible was discussed. With peace then felt soon at hand, Lincoln was for generous surrender terms. After the meeting, he parted company with Sherman whom he had seen for the first and last time. To return to the front as soon as possible, Sherman was given the fast BAT which took him to New Bern, N. C. On the 29th after a day ashore, the President returned to the

QUEEN to await news of the Army's successes. On that rainy night aboard the QUEEN, he heard the sounds of war and saw the flashes of the heavy guns reflected on the clouds. Grant that day left for the front anxious to give the President good news as soon as possible, remarking to an aide, "I think we can send him some good news in a day or two." Lincoln now wired his wife who had returned to the capitol that Petersburg had been enveloped by Grants Army.

With Petersburg and Richmond about to be evacuated, Grant now wires the President that Sheridan was carrying all before him and as all aides were busy at the front, dispatched a war correspondent to visit Lincoln on the QUEEN with good news. Cadwallander, the war correspondent had with him a number of Confederate flags captured by Sheridan and spent over an hour regaling Lincoln with good news. As the President, still quartered on the RIVER QUEEN wanted to be in on the final surrender, he accepted Grant's invitation to visit Richmond. For this, he had Admiral Porter take him aboard the flagship MALVERN up the James. When river obstructions barred the way, Porter had the President put aboard a barge from the MALVERN manned by a dozen sailors. With Richmond in flames, the party landed near Libby Prison. Porter then had ten of the sailors armed with carbines to form a guard for a walk through a part of the city where the President was received with joyful demonstrations. The President's sleep the first night aboard the MALVERN must have been fitful, as his stateroom bunk was much too short for his length. The second night aboard was more comfortable, as Porter had the bunk remodeled and lengthened unknown to Lincoln. The Presidents' well known sense of humor was revealed at breakfast with the remark that he must have "shrunk six inches in length and about a foot sidewise."

Mrs. Lincoln who had returned to the capitol on April 1st, now again joined her husband with son Tad along on the 6th. That day with the President aboard the QUEEN, came the news of Seward's serious injuries from having been thrown from his carriage at Washington. Leaving the QUEEN, he went ashore to wire Grant of the accident which worried him. That day and the next were busy ones when he tired himself out conducting interviews, reviewing troops and shaking hands with many. He then retired again on the vessel for a well needed rest. On the next day, he inspected hospital camps and conferred with Army officers. With Seward's condition worsening, he decided to return to Washington sooner than he wished. A train took him back to City Point and the QUEEN where, following the evening meal, a military band marched down to board the vessel for a farewell concert. At 11 P.M. on March 8th, the vessel sailed down the James from City Point to return the President to the capitol. She landed at Washington on Sunday, March 9th at 9 P.M. Before Lincoln retired that night, news had reached him of Lee's surrender to Grant that day. This was the last time he was to tread the QUEEN's decks as he was shot at Ford's Theatre on the 14th and died the next day.

By July 9th, President Johnson who had assumed the Presidency was harrassed with a number of post-war problems which had exhausted him. He was advised by Secretary of the Navy Welles and Attorney General James Speed to take a vacation. For this, Speed suggested the RIVER QUEEN which he described as 'the President's yacht." As she had only been chartered by the Army and had never been in the Navy, Welles retorted that he knew of no such vessel. Johnson, probably out of respect for his predecessor who had trod her dack so many times commented that he would never set foot upon the vessel. Welles then suggested a Navy boat, the DON, a British-built former blockade runner which had been captured and bought by the Navy from the prize court. Johnson boarded the DON for a short trip on the Potomac as far as Aquia Creek. Four days later, the Washington quartermaster in charge of Washington's Sixth Street wharf reported to General Rucker, quartermaster at the capitol, that since May 1st last the QUEEN had made two trips to Richmond, excursions down the Potomac and a trip to Fort Monroe and Norfolk. The report was requested with a view to her discharge from government service. The steamer BALOON was suggested to replace her. Less than two weeks later on October 30th, her charter ended and she was returned to the owners who had chartered her. In July 1866, Van Santvoord wrote to Quartermaster General Meigs at Washington that he understood the Army wanted a steamer to run between Key West and the Tortugas in Florida, stating that the RIVER QUEEN could be chartered for that purpose and that she had been thoroughly overhauled and repainted. The offer was not accepted.

The QUEEN's next enrollment on September 6, 1866 was with Alfred Van Santvoord who had joined in her first charter and Milton Martin. On March 15, 1867 she was enrolled with David S. Williams and on April 23, 1868 with Van Santvoord and Martin again. All these men were New Yorkers who had her enrolled there and until the summer of 1868, continued her on the Potomac. In the summer of 1868, Van Santvoord and Martin leased her to the Long Branch & Sea Shore Railroad for its water route between Spermacetti Cove at the base of Sandy Hook and New York City. This railroad connected Long Branch and Jersey shore resorts with the city. On this route, the QUEEN followed the NEVERSINK, WILLIAM COOK and RICH-

ARD STOCKTON. After this railroad was bought out in 1870 by the New Jersey Southern Railroad,

Long Branch & Sea Shore
RAIL-ROAD.

1868.

THIS ROUTE is NOW OPEN for TRAVEL.

THE STEAMBOAT

"RIVER QUEEN,"

(CAPT. DANIEL SALISBURY,)

Leaves New-York from south side of Desbrosses St. Pier,
DAILY (Sundays excepted),

At 10:30 A. M. and 4:00 P. M.
Leaving Long Branch at 7:15 A. M.
and 1:00 P. M.

Stopping FOR PASSENGERS ONLY, at Pier No. 3, N. R., at 4:10 P. M., and on the first trip up in the morning.

Fare each way, $1.00; Excursion Tickets, $1.50;
Monthly Commutation, $20.00.

☞On SATURDAYS there will be an Extra Train from LONG BRANCH for NEW-YORK at 6:15 P. M. This will afford a fine chance for an Excursion, by leaving New-York at 10:30 A. M., arriving on return at about 7:30 P. M.

Dodd's Express Co. will attend to all Baggage and Express matters, and will have Tickets for sale at all their offices.

M. PAUL, Superintendent.

In 1868, the RIVER QUEEN was leased to the Long Branch and Sea Shore Railroad to cover its water route twice daily except on Sundays between the city and its terminal on Spermacetti Cove near the base of Sandy Hook. The line connected the city with Long Branch and other Jersey shore resorts in Monmouth.

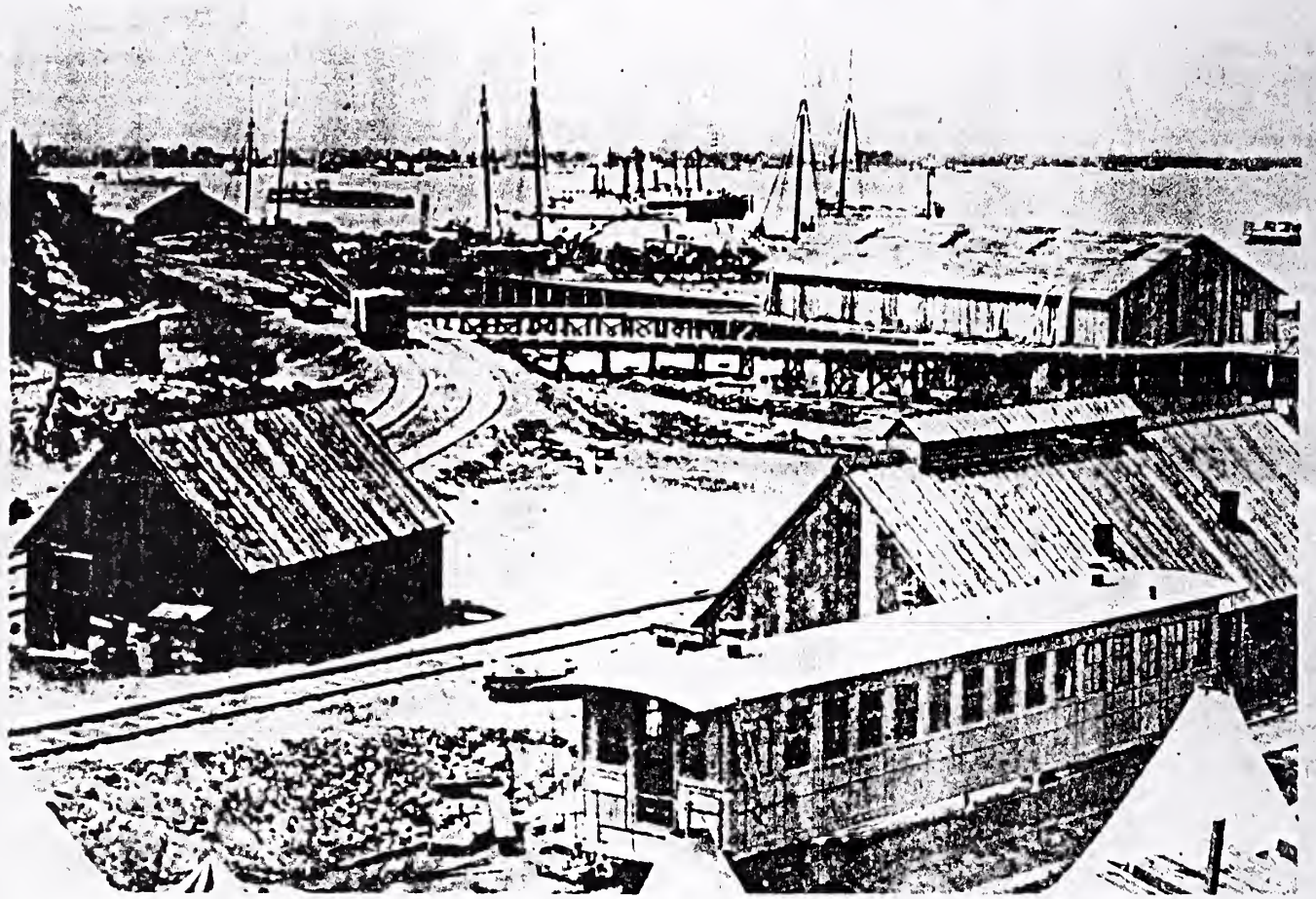
she was enrolled at the end of the summer season that year with James F. Thorn of New York City. In April 1873, she was enrolled in the name of the Newburgh Steamboat Company which Thorn and others had formed. For a few years she ran between Newburgh on the Hudson and New York City.

The QUEEN was now to return to New England service. Shortly after her enrollment with the Newburgh Steamboat Company, she was enrolled that year with the New Bedford, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamboat Company to run between Woods Hole on the Massachusetts mainland and Martha's Vineyard. In 1874, she was sold to the Nantucket & Cape Cod Steamboat Company for $60,000 to run between Hyannis and Nantucket. During that summer, President Grant heard of this new service and took his family to New England on a vacation, boarding the old vessel he knew so well for a trip from Hyannis to Nantucket and return. He must have pointed out with pride the saloon in which Lincoln had sat with him, General Sherman and Admiral Porter in the famous conference of February 1865. She was often sought out by passengers who remembered her notable war service.

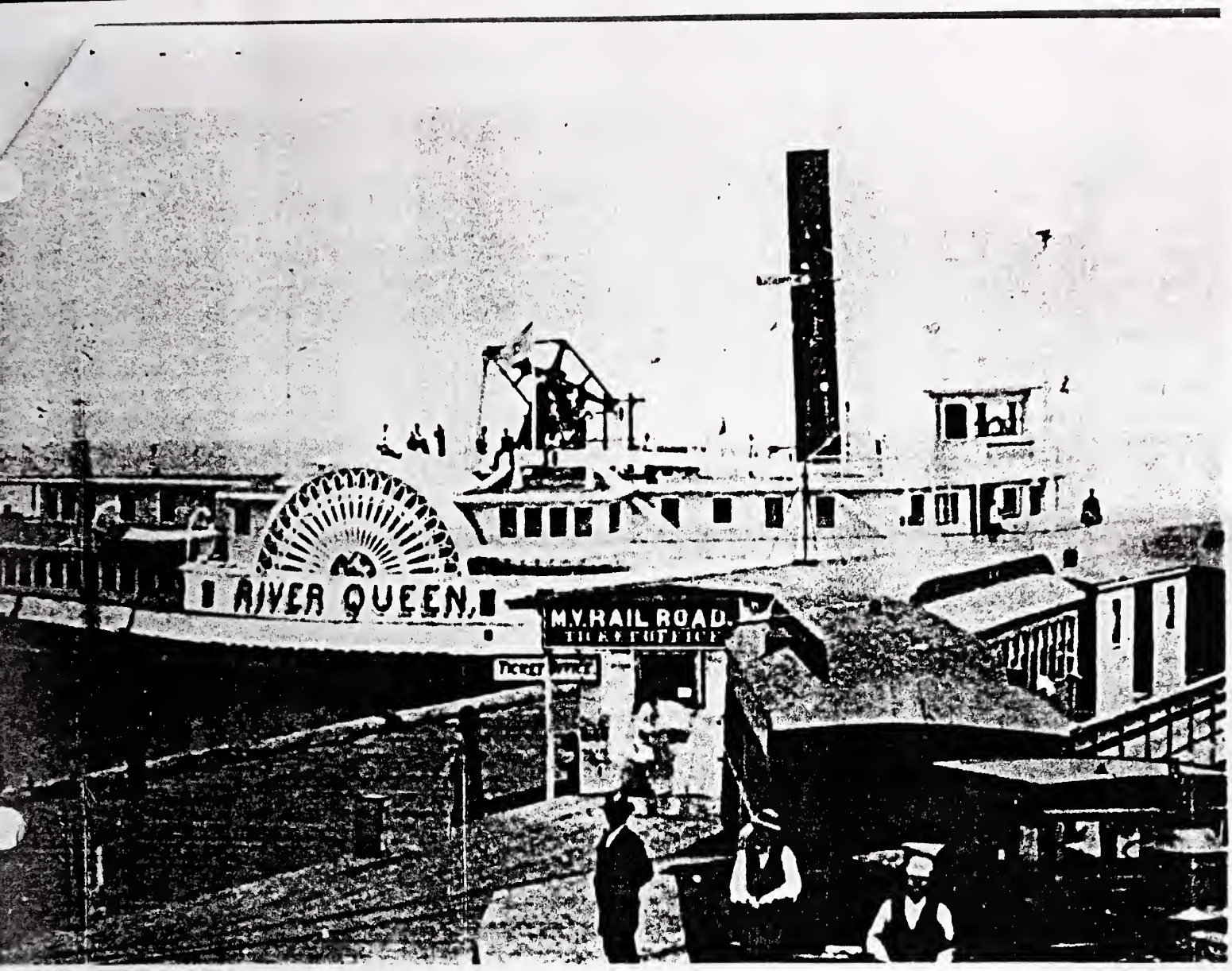
In 1886, the QUEEN was reacquired by the New Bedford, Martha's Vineyard & Nantucket Steamboat Company. In 1892, after about eighteen years service on Nantucket Sound, she was bought by the Mount Vernon & Marshall Steamboat Company which had her enrolled at Washington, D. C. to return to her former haunts on the Potomac where she carried thousands of excursionists between the capitol and historic Mount Vernon. There, she was again sought out by many who still remembered the part she had during the Civil War. In May 1898, she was sold to and licensed by the Independent Steamboat & Barge Company. Shortly thereafter she became a barge and was again licensed by an individual owner. This license, her last document, was surrendered in April 1911 with a notation that what remained of her had burned and the wreck sold as junk. The timbers Terry had put into her had lasted about forty-seven years.

Top: President Lincoln conferring with Generals Grant and Sherman and Admiral Porter in the famous conference held in the after saloon of the RIVER QUEEN in late March 1865. From a painting by George Healy, Courtesy of The White House, Washington, D. C.

Bottom: Mirror from the RIVER QUEEN stateroom occupied by President Lincoln. Courtesy, The Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass.



Views of General Grant's base of supplies at City Point during the last ten months of the war. Shown are storehouses, railroad spurs to docks and piers and vessels off shore. The site was at the junction of the James and Appottomax Rivers. Petersburg was about ten miles to the west and Richmond about eighteen miles northwest. Grant's headquarters was on the bluff above the site in Appottomax Manor. President Lincoln was often aboard the RIVER QUEEN here after she had become the general's dispatch boat. From photographs by the war's photographer, Mathew Brady.



Steamship Historical Society of America, Inc.

RIVER QUEEN

ROUTE:	Providence - Martha's Vineyard	NUMBER:	21455
PORTS:	Providence, Martha's Vineyard	LENGTH:	181.1
COMPANY:	Vineyard Co., chartered to	BREADTH:	28.5
	Old Colony Railroad Co.	DRAUGHT:	9.0
LOCATION:	Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, 1864	GROSS TONNAGE:	578.37
BUILT:	1864 - Keyport, New Jersey.		
HISTORY:	1873-1881, with *ISLAND HOME* as replacement for *MONOHANSETT*.		
STATUS:	Burned July 9, 1911, Washington, D.C.		

THE STEAMSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC.

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